

Conference Reviews by the AACCS Student Life Team

As a student life team, we are consistently seeking to learn from those who are experts in their fields of study, particularly pertaining to areas of need identified in our student body. Our greatest desire is to help our students at the upper school think well and navigate through difficulties and challenges in all areas of life in light of our place in the narrative of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. Though many webinars and seminars have already been attended by various members of the SLT this year, we wanted to highlight two in particular.

Being Human: Gender, Sexuality, and Fulfillment, Conference review from Anne Hartman

Two faculty-wide areas of focus at the Upper School this year are fostering right relationships and teaching/operating from a Biblical Worldview. As we seek to foster right relationships, faculty and staff are working to help each other and our students grow in their ability to see ourselves and others as God sees us, so that we can build each other up and not tear down. As we seek to grow in our ability to use and model a biblical worldview, faculty and staff look for ways to reflect on and discuss everything from procedures to problems in light of our place in the narrative of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.

With these goals in mind, Cynthia Tilghman-Lee and Senior Practicum Director Anne Hartman attended a two-day conference this fall in Falls Church, VA, on the topic of "Being Human: Gender, Sexuality, and Fulfillment." This conference walked through the ways that a biblical understanding of what it means to be human, embodied, and longing for relational fulfillment can help shape the ways we interact with complex issues such as homosexuality and transgenderism. Conference sessions touched on how Scripture addresses homosexuality, how we can understand the modern transgender movement, and concluded with a session and panel discussion on how we can live graciously in a post-Christian society. Dr. Lee and Ms. Hartman attended this conference in order to better help students who are struggling with issues of gender and/or sexuality, or are researching these areas as part of their senior practicum work. They came away from the conference with renewed motivation and tools to help students understand the ways that they reflect God's image and were designed to flourish in deep relationship with others, regardless of what they may be struggling with.

Girl Drama with Dr. Tracie Berry-McGhee, Conference review from Leia Joseph

Angela Beall, Leia Joseph, Cynthia Lee, and Jake Palumbo attended an all-day seminar in Baltimore, entitled "Girl Drama." As faculty and staff seek to foster strong, healthy, and life-giving relationships amongst our students, we have been seeking to gather more tools to equip our kids in how to love one another well. Though boys are certainly

not exempt from the need to grow in treating others with greater love and respect, the workshop focused on why females tend to have more “drama” in their relationships and how school staff can come alongside and assist them.

The conference walked through the different roles girls will play in their involvement in relational conflict which includes the target, aggressor, bystanders (majority of individuals) and at times, the upstander (the one who confronts and stands up to the aggressor). Dr. Berry-McGhee noted that many girls will experience and play different roles throughout their school years. She also explained that relational aggression is on the rise and the primary motivators include social status, media magazines, competition, lack of conflict resolution skills, desire for power, control, popularity, fear, reality TV, and every element of the Social Media phenomenon. Much time was devoted to discussing the differences in the male and female brain, and how their functioning affects social struggles. One of the many interesting comparisons is as follows:

	Girls	Boys
Friendships form among	two or three girls	two to 12 boys
Friendships focus on	each other	shared interest in an activity of game
games and sports are	an excuse to get together	central to the relationship
conversations are	central to the relationship	often unnecessary
hierarchies	destroy the friendship	build and organize camaraderie
self-revelation	a precious badge of friendship	to be avoided if possible

The conference also thoroughly discussed cyberbullying, intimacy disorders, internet addiction, and trauma and how schools can develop and encourage open disclosure, standing up to injustices, and creating safe spaces for student reporting. As a SLT, we desire to help students grow in their ability to see themselves as image bearers who love others well, and build each other up versus tearing down in their hurt and frustration. Please pray for us as we seek to educate and empower our students to love and care for all of their “neighbors” with Christ-like love at school and throughout the world.